

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 227156 TOSEC 270081

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ORIGIN PA-02

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PRS-01 SS-15 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SSO-00

CCO-00 /024 R

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, US, PFOR

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT DAN MORGAN BY-LINER, WASHINGTON POST, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, HEADED "CRISIS INFORMATION FLOW TO HILL HELD INADEQUATE."

2. A SUBSTANTIAL PERCENTAGE OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WERE DISSATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY, QUANTITY AND TIMELINESS OF INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THEM BY THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH DURING FOUR RECENT INTERNATIONAL CRISES, ACCORDING TO A GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE SURVEY.

3. FOUR OUT OF FIVE OF THE 238 HOUSE AND SENATE MEMBERS WHO RESPONDED TO THE GAO'S QUESTIONS REPORTED THAT THE NEWS MEDIA WERE THEIR MAIN SOURCE OF INFORMATION DURING THE WAR IN ANGOLA IN LATE 1975, THE MAYAGUEZ SEIZURE IN MAY, 1975, THE VIETNAM EVACUATION IN APRIL, 1975, AND THE MIDEAST WAR OF OCTOBER, 1973.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 227156 TOSEC 270081

4. IN THE CASE OF THE MOST RECENT CRISIS, THE ANGOLA WAR, 62 PER CENT SAID THE INFORMATION FLOW FROM THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH WAS POOR OR UNSATISFACTORY. FOR THE VIETNAM EVACUATION AND THE MIDEAST WAR THE LEVEL OF DISSATISFACTION WAS 44 PER CENT AND 30 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY.

5. THE ONLY EXCEPTION TO THE NEGATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING WORK WAS THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT, DURING WHICH HALF OF THOSE SURVEYED RATED THE PERFORMANCE AS EXCELLENT OR GOOD. A LARGE MAJORITY OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE MEMBERS RESPONDING SAID THEY FAVORED A MUCH MORE ACTIVE HILL ROLE IN THE FUTURE, INCLUDING INAUGURATION OF A "CONGRESSIONAL WATCH CENTER" TO RECEIVE THE SAME INFORMATION THAT NORMALLY FLOWS ONLY TO CRISIS CENTERS IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

6. COMMENTING ON THE REPORT, REP. PAUL FINDLEY (R-ILL.) SAID, "THERE HASN'T BEEN ANY CONSULTATION WORTHY OF THE NAME SINCE I'VE BEEN HERE." HE WAS ELECTED IN 1960.

7. THE GAO REPORT SAID THAT "EXECUTIVE BRANCH CONTROL OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DAILY CONDUCT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS DURING TIMES OF INTERNATIONAL CRISIS HAS MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR CONGRESS TO EXERCISE ITS CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, PARTICULARLY IN SITUATIONS INVOLVING THE USE OF FORCE."

8. THE GAO REPORTED THAT, IN THE CASE OF THE MAYAGUEZ, THREE OUT OF FIVE OF THE POLLED MEMBERS FELT THEY WERE "INFORMED" RATHER THAN "CONSULTED" ABOUT THE ACTION TO BE TAKEN TO RESCUE THE AMERICAN SHIP AND CREW WHICH WERE SEIZED BY CAMBODIA IN THE GULF OF SIAM.

9. SEN. DICK CLARK (D-IOWA), CHAIRMAN OF THE AFRICAN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, SAID SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY A. KISSINGER HAD BRIEFED THE COMMITTEE QUITE OFTEN IN THE LAST TWO YEARS.

10. BUT HE ADDED, "THERE'S NEVER BEEN AN OCCASION WHEN THE SECRETARY COMES UP HERE AND SAYS, 'NOW TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.'"

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 227156 TOSEC 270081

11. CLARK SAID THAT HE DID NOT LEARN OF THE SECRET CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY FINANCING OF A POLITICAL FACTION IN ANGOLA UNTIL JULY, 1975, SIX MONTHS AFTER THE OPERATION BEGAN. HE SAID THAT WHEN THE SENATE HELD AN EXECUTIVE SESSION ON ANGOLA LAST DECEMBER, "IT WAS ONE OF THOSE DAYS WHEN WE SPENT HOURS JUST ESTABLISHING WHAT THE FACTS WERE-- MANY SENATORS ONLY KNEW WHAT THEY'D SEEN IN THE PAPERS."

12. OF THOSE QUERIED, 68 PER CENT FAVORED ESTABLISHING A "CONGRESSIONAL WATCH CENTER" TO TAKE INFORMATION DURING CRISES. FIFTY EIGHT PER CENT FAVORED DELEGATING A SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL TO OBSERVE EXECUTIVE BRANCH DELIBERATIONS AND PROVIDE CONGRESS WITH A FULL REPORT.

FORTY PER CENT SUPPORTED SENDING A CONGRESSIONAL OBSERVER TO MEETINGS OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL OR OTHER CRISIS MANAGEMENT GROUPS.

13. SEVENTY-EIGHT PER CENT OF THE MEMBERS FELT THE GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE SHOULD BE ASSESSED AFTER A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CRISIS.

14. "EVERY PRESIDENT WANTS TO DO MORE TO INFORM CONGRESS WHEN HE STARTS OUT," SAID REP. BENJAMIN S. ROSENTHAL (D-N.Y.) "BUT IT BECOMES A BURDEN. WE (IN CONGRESS) DO HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO SET LONG-TERM PARAMETERS FOR ACTION ABROAD, EVEN THOUGH WE DON'T WANT TO DEAL WITH EVERYDAY DETAILS OF FOREIGN POLICY. (END TEXT.) ROBINSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TOSEC, INFORMATION MEDIA, TEXT, US CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS, THE PRESS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE227156
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JCHAMBERLAIN:JC
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760346-1165
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760961/aaaacadb.tel
Line Count: 136
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN PA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vandyklc
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 FEB 2004 by MaustMC>; APPROVED <31 AUG 2004 by vandyklc>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESS MATERIAL
TAGS: SOPN, PFOR, US, (MORGAN, DAN)
To: SECRETARY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006